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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 000686

SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/19/2018
TAGS: PGOV PTER CO VE
SUBJECT: BRV ACCUSES COLOMBIAN ARMY OF INCURSION

REF: A. CARACAS 00649 B. CARACAS 00684

Classified By: Robert Downes, Political Counselor,
for Reason 1.4(d)

¶11. (C) SUMMARY: The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) alleges that Colombian soldiers crossed into the southwestern Venezuelan border state of Apure on May 16. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) reportedly filed a formal protest calling for an immediate stop to these "violations of international rights, sovereignty and the territorial integrity of Venezuela." Local media reported widely on the Government of Colombia's (GOC) denial that any troops had crossed into Venezuela. Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro announced during a May 19 joint press conference with Defense Minister Gustavo Rangel Briceno that Colombia and Venezuela would reactivate bilateral agreements to clear up misunderstandings diplomatically and to "thwart the imperialist plan to destabilize the region and fill it with violence." Coming so close on the heels of Interpol's verification of the FARC hard drives, this is likely to be another attempt by the BRV to divert attention from evidence of BRV - FARC ties. END SUMMARY.

GHOST RECON

¶12. (SBU) According to the BRV, on May 16, 60 Colombian soldiers from the 1st Energy and Highway Battalion under the command of 2nd Lieutenant Jhonny Ocampo Jurado stationed at the Cubara Military base in Arauca Colombia were intercepted 800 meters inside Venezuelan territory and ordered back across the border. (Note: the BRV gave the exact coordinates as 7 degrees 2 minutes 12.5 seconds N by 72 degrees 2 minutes 6.4 seconds W in the Venezuelan state of Apure. End Note.)

LUNGE, PARRY, RIPOSTE

¶13. (SBU) Local media promptly reported that Colombian President Uribe said he would offer his apologies if any proof on a border violation was given. Local media also carried Colombian Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos', May 18 denial that any Colombian soldiers had crossed the frontier and his statement that their investigation of the area turned up construction equipment and two Venezuelan civilians on the Colombian side of the border. BRV Information Minister Andres Izzara responded by calling Santos "uninformed, or at least pretending to be," and added that the BRV had "photographic evidence" and other material that would be revealed "at the appropriate time." During a joint May 19 press conference with Defense Minister Gustavo Rangel Briceno, Foreign Minister Nicolas Maduro called this proof of a plot by "sectors of the Colombian government dedicated to violence" and the United States to justify armed intervention (Ref. A). In keeping with Venezuela's "pacifist doctrine," Maduro announced the re-activation of unspecified bi-lateral agreements to resolve border disputes.

¶14. (C) Comment: Senior BRV officials may be trying to distract public attention from the May 16 Interpol validation of the FARC computers containing damaging evidence of BRV-FARC ties by highlighting alleged border incursions by Colombia and minor navigation errors by U.S. forces (Ref. B).

End Comment.

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